DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 290 847 CE 049 431

AUTHOR Parsons, Cynthia
TITLE SerVermont--The Second Year. 1987.
REPORT NO ISBN-0-9617872-1-X
PUB DATE 88
NOTE 60p.; For a related document, see CE 049 430.
AVAILABLE FROM Vermont Schoolhouse Press, P.O. Box 516, Chester, VT 05143 ($5.00).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Community Programs; Financial Support; High Schools; *High School Students; Intergenerational Programs; Program Development; Program Implementation; *Social Responsibility; *Statewide Planning; *Student Participation; *Volunteers
IDENTIFIERS *SerVermont; Vermont

ABSTRACT

SerVermont is a volunteer program for high school students. The program stresses public service in the community and is intended to teach students the value of personal volunteer service to their local communities. During SerVermont's second year of operation, 15 high schools were awarded minigrants ($200 if one teacher was involved, $300 if more than one teacher was involved) to be used in developing programs combining in-class academic study and student involvement in community service. SerVermont also sponsored a program in which teams of eight high school-aged campers and two college-aged leaders worked together to help a single farmer for a concentrated five-day week. A series of teacher workshops was held to solicit ideas on ways in which high school students could serve their local communities, and SerVermont's coordinator spoke at several conferences throughout the state to explain the program and discover ways of expanding it. There has been considerable interest in developing programs in which high school students provide various services to senior citizens as well as in programs which involve both high school students and senior citizens. SerVermont is also considering starting a program of awarding grants to schools to offer all-night alcohol-free parties for graduating seniors throughout the state. (Appendixes include various program memos and four newspaper articles about SerVermont.) (MN)

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SerVermont

The Second Year

1987

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Author: Cynthia Parsons

Publisher: The Vermont Schoolhouse Press
P.O. Box 516
Chester, VT 05143

SerVermont - The Second Year 1987

A report from the SerVermont
Coordinator, Cynthia Parsons,
to all interested,
telling how Vermont's teachers
integrated academics and community service
and how the Governor,
Commissioner of Education,
and State Board of Education
furthered the concept of
statewide community service and
initiated a
SerVermont Awards Competition.

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The Vermont Schoolhouse Press

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ISBN: 0-9617872-1-X

$5.00

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Preface

Governor Madeline M. Kunin

"In this coming year,
we will launch a
volunteer program
for high school students,
stressing public service
in the community,
called 'SerVermont.'
Students will be taught
the value of personal
volunteer service and
our communities should
benefit from their efforts."

From the State of the State Address

JANUARY 9, 1986

SerVermont is a Dream

A Dream that every student in Vermont's public schools will do some important community service

A Dream that every community will be enriched by the voluntary service done by its student-citizens.

A Dream that each nonprofit organization in Vermont will train and use students to enhance the quality of service each one provides its clients.

A Dream that each government agency in Vermont will make a place for student volunteers, thereby helping to bring civics and citizenship lessons alive.

A Dream that parents and guardians will encourage and support student volunteers, making it possible for them to learn by doing; i.e. to learn how to be small "d" democrats.

A Dream that school authorities will encourage and support students in community service as an essential part of free public schooling.

SerVermont is a dream coming true.

SerVermont's Teachers Winners

Bellows Free Academy, Fairfax $300 -- A town history project by 4th and 6th graders involving townspeople and students. Pat Nilsson and Al Daniels.

Cabot High School $200 -- Calendar & Post Cards depicting young and old with local photos. Helen Morrison and Elaine Metcalf.

Canaan Memorial High $200 -- Case study of the town of Canaan based partly on taped interviews. Randy Scott Davison.

Colchester High $100 -- Variety of music groups to perform in local hospital for long-term patients. Steffen Parker.

Fair Haven Union High $167 -- Study of the Castleton River for potential energy source and implications of impact on the environment. Robert P. Mahar.

Leland and Gray High School, Townshend $300 -- Design and installation of aviaries and aquariums in two local senior center/nursing homes by students in health, science, and industrial arts classes. Dan Darrow, Roberta Devlin-Scherer, Joan Smidutz, Peter Fischer and Dave McFarlin.

Lyndon Institute $200 -- A "Break the Winter Blues" Lunch for the area's senior citizens. Cathy Boykin.

Middlebury Union Junior High $200 -- Investigation of local service agencies available to 7th/8th graders, and production of a booklet detailing the services with distribution throughout Addison County. Peggy J. Peabody.

U-32, Montpelier $200 -- Bring senior citizens to specific classes as resource people to support course work. Joyce DeForge.

Mt. Abraham Union High, Bristol $200 -- Development of annual wildlife and natural phenomena calendar with community input. Earl Durand.

Proctor Jr.-Sr. High $300 -- Build a food service/refreshment stand, and provide light food at the community skating rink. Bruce Hansen and Cyndie Clark.

Twinfield High School, Plainfield $300 -- Design and build a community running and exercise path. Mike Clark

Vergennes Union High $200 -- Assist with renovation of a local shelter for the homeless. Donna Scott.

West Rutland High $200 -- On request, repair of furniture and small engines for area elderly and handicapped. Mitchell Sidd.

Wilmington High $200 -- Research on causes of Dutch elm disease and planting of 10-12 seedlings of a new resistant variety in selected areas of the community. Bruce Parks.

Looking Back

In 1986, Vermont pioneered the only statewide student community service initiative. We're still the only state with a full-scale effort encompassing all 66 academic secondary schools.

But it is important to point out that SerVermont not only is privately funded (with important exceptions), but its coordinator volunteers her time and energy.

For the 18 months from January 1986 - June 1987, SerVermont had a budget of $31,500, with grants from the Edwin Gould Foundation for Children, The Turrell Fund, Commonwealth Fund, Hazen Foundation, and Roy and Edith Simpson.

In the first 12 months, some 15 secondary schools began new student community service projects with help from SerVermont, and starting in January 1987, another 15 schools introduced exciting community service projects tied in with academic instruction.

New funds were secured for the funding period of June 1987 - May 1988, from The Edwin Gould Foundation for Children, the Turrell Fund, the Vermont Community Foundation, and the Windham Foundation.

The grant from the Gould Foundation is for sole support of a book -- still in the works -- first called "Like What," and now named "SerVermont and the USA." The book will explain to students, school officials, and nonprofit agencies how student community service can be integrated with student life as well as standard academics.

Total funds for SerVermont, up to 31 December 1987, are $13,500, and once again Vermont College/Norwich University is -- for a modest 10% -- handling the bookkeeping and accounting.

A request -- due date 1 January 1988 -- is into the Ben & Jerry Foundation for a $10,000 grant to continue support of academically-integrated student service as well as to help fund planning grants for Project Graduation.

This, if awarded, would make the 12-month June '87-May '88 budget $23,500. Without the Ben & Jerry grant, the $13,500 will have to suffice.

As the first year-end report explained, the Vermont Department of Education made a desk available for use by the SerVermont Intern, who was able to use the phone, make multiple copies of necessary documents, and do bulk pre-paid postage mailings.

These privileges were extended throughout all of 1987, and helped stretch the limited SerVermont budget.

Student community service at both the school and university level received both in 1986, and more so in 1987, considerable interest nationwide.

"SerVermont - The First Year 1986" was distributed nationwide, and Cynthia Parsons was invited to speak at some half dozen conferences around the U.S. on the subject of student community service.

While nearly everyone has dealt in some way with student volunteers in line agencies, and with using students in fund-raising efforts, SerVermont's emphasis on integrating service with academics has drawn the most interest both in Vermont and across the U.S.

It might be useful to review the strategy Cynthia Parsons used to introduce SerVermont. First, she elicited support and interest from the office of the Governor and the Commissioner of Education.

They -- jointly -- wrote each academic secondary school principal, introducing SerVermont, Cynthia, and voluntary student service.

This was followed up with school visits by Cynthia, and offers to help defray "extra" expenses for student-initiated community service activities.

There were mini-grant competitions aimed at helping community elderly, town officials, and both the town and school libraries.

During the first summer and later in the fall of 1986, efforts were made to inventory agencies and programs eligible for student volunteers; this helped to get SerVermont known by both the schools and the agencies eager to use student help.

And during the Christmas, 1986, season, SerVermont's intern worked with some Burlington area schools and agencies to help draw more students into helping the elderly.

Together, the SerVermont Intern and the coordinator drove more than 15,000 miles, spent more than $1,000 on phone calls, contacted at least 500 non-profit agencies, and wrote 33 memorandums detailing both the successes and the failures of their efforts.

We called the first year "incredible."

What to call the second year?

"Growing." Yes, SerVermont has grown in stature and importance. Still unknown by many school officials and parents throughout Vermont, nevertheless, it is slowly and surely helping schools, students, and agencies to find and support each other.

During 1986, we found that many of the directors of government offices as well as nonprofit agencies had had so little contact with student volunteers, that they actually saw no way to use

them to advantage. For example, at the same time that school secretaries used student volunteers to carry out a myriad of tasks, town clerks argued that there was "nothing here for them to do."

We also found that many organizations only saw students in terms of fund-raising activities, and seldom even took the time to explain how their funds were to be used.

And students -- who biked or hiked or ran for funds -- seldom knew what their funds were buying, and, of course, saw little difference in biking in general and biking, say, to raise funds for the United Way.

We also discovered that if the principal and other key administrators in a secondary school weren't very interested in students doing community service, then the majority of the teachers eschewed any integration of student service and academic assignments.

And what was particularly frustrating was the argument by a large percent of Vermont public secondary school leaders that service by a small group -- the honor society or members of the student government -- was enough for them to say that they were "all in favor" of student community service.

Our estimate is that in 1986, some 30-50 percent of Vermont's secondary schools had some community service component, but that less than 1/10 of all secondary school students had an opportunity to design and carry out a community service on their own or in a small group.

1987

Teachers' Mini Grants

Each of the 66 principals was sent a letter in early January asking that an enclosed mini-grant competition invitation be placed in each teacher's mailbox at school. There was some evidence that a few principals just threw the mini-grant announcement away; some principals popped the announcement into a single teacher's box; but a good many did duplicate the announcement and give one to each teacher.

The teachers were invited to apply for $200 if the project was to be done by one teacher, and for $300 if two or more teachers and classes of students were involved.

In the announcement, the mini grants were allocated for "A Service-Learning Project," with the following stated purpose:

"To design a project which combines in-class academic study with some involvement in community service. For example, math students might offer bookkeeping assistance to non-profit organizations or the town treasurer. English composition students might put out a newsletter for a town or non-profit organization. Physical science students might offer to do a research project to help solve a community problem."

Nineteen projects were sent in; 15 were funded for a total of $3,267.00 (See Preface Page iii.)

What's remarkable is that no two were alike; they ranged across the curriculum; the ideas were fresh, and the projects all of the sort that could and should be duplicated.

SerVermont - The First Year 1986

In a December, 1986 meeting, Gov. Kunin asked if Cynthia would be writing a year-end report. After some discussion, and consultation with Alec Dickson in London, Cynthia decided not just to write another memo, but to put together a small paperback book detailing just what had happened in 1986. The paperback (8-1/2" x 11") was published in January 1987.

The Governor was given 25+ copies; so, too, the Commissioner of Education. The SerVermont Intern distributed more than 150 copies to all 66 of Vermont's academic secondary schools, and to selected student community service workers nationwide. The working press in the major cities were sent a press release and a copy of the report; also about 25 contacts in the education press received complimentary copies.

"SerVermont - The First Year 1986" received high praise from journalists, educators, youth workers, and government officials.

More than 100 copies were sold ($8/9.25 mailed) to school contacts in 40 states.

The Vermont Department of Education did not distribute copies to Vermont media until March, nor was a planned press conference held with the education committees of the house and senate.

Hence, there was more attention given to SerVermont in the winter of 1987 out of state than in state; and no state papers carried major stories about the statewide effort.

There were, though, good stories written covering local SerVermont projects; almost all the teachers who integrated community service with class work reported good coverage locally of the pupils' activities.

"SerVermont - The First Year 1986" was criticized by Ed Meade of the Ford Foundation for not carrying any analytical material, and he was correct in his assessment. The effort was documentation; what happened and what and who made it happen.

It will take more distance before arguments could and should be made about how a private individual with private funding should have encouraged a whole state to consider and reconsider student community service.

Should there have been legislative consideration?

Should the state have allocated some of the funds?

Should the State Department of Education have taken over the program as soon as it began to gain momentum?

Should the State Board of Education have been the governing source?

Or should, as happened, the effort be individual and school-related? Should the impetus, as was the case, have been without regulations and rules?

Memos as Journal Entries

Since the beginning, Cynthia has written memos which have been shared with a small Vermont advisory committee, and occasionally with funding sources. These memos are written in journal style, and chronicle each step as well as each misstep.

Cynthia wrote 33 memos the first year; 17 in 1987.

A selection of entries from this year's memos will appear at the close of this book in the chapter on "Documentation."

SerVermont Student Service Awards

On 9 January 1987, Cynthia wrote in a memo: "I couldn't be more pleased! We will have an awards contest to honor student groups (two students to a whole school) for exemplary quality service."

The idea was that superintendents would nominate potential winners and that a team of legislators would judge among them.

That did not happen in January, or February or March...

Because Cynthia wanted the contest to help stimulate interest in student community service, and to give such service statewide visibility, she kept asking Judy Stephany in the Governor's office and Steve Kaagan if such a project couldn't come about.

Finally, on August 18th, Cynthia met with the Vermont State Board of Education and asked them if they were not interested in working with the Governor's office, the Legislature, and the Commissioner to hold a competition for SerVermont Student Community Service Awards.

They were receptive, and asked the Commissioner to come up with a plan to hold such a contest at their next meeting.

The upshot of that was a plan worked out primarily by the press officer for the Department of Education, a plan calling initially for each of the legislators to nominate candidates, and for an "outside" group to do the judging.

Cynthia was adamant that she should not be a nominator or judge, or that SerVermont, which is really an initiative and not an entity, be the awarder or even the funder of the awards.

Cynthia's argument stems from the notion that her work is to encourage and stimulate school-based community service, and that she not be seen as a judge or regulator, but as encouragement for any progress whatever form it takes.

She also argued that the presence of a statewide award coming from the highest offices in the state concerned with education would do more than anything else to give a stamp of *legitimate* to exciting and exemplary student community service activities.

As this year-end report is being written -- the third week of December -- judges are going over the nominations, and the awards ceremony is scheduled to come during the opening of the Vermont Legislature.

The awards are, of course, not to be confined to projects which received SerVermont funds, but to any exemplary student community service activity.

Bulletin: Beth Burgess, press officer for the for the Department of Education called Friday 18 December to say that the judging was done, and that there are six winners.

Plans call for the giving of the awards on 21 January at the State House.

Cynthia had hoped at one point that all nominations for the awards would come from the representatives in the Vermont House; and that the judges would come from the Senate.

Instead, self-nominations were sought, but perhaps after the Legislature convenes for the 1988 year, some consideration could be given to setting up such a program, guaranteeing that every town and hamlet would be included, and that every legislator would be on the look out annually for good candidates.

There are some awards programs in operation in several cities, but generally all nominees are honored, and there is not that second tier or choice of 5-10 "winners."

Vermont will have another "first." The first state to have a statewide student community service initiative; and now the first state to give awards based on a competition solely for student community service activities.

SerVermont's Farmers

Clearly one of the greatest needs in Vermont is the preservation of its farms and farm lands.

How could SerVermont help?

On 17 January Cynthia met with the Master and Executive Board of the Vermont Grange. Cynthia thought that with the help of Tom Hark and the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps and Henry Francis of the Student Conservation Association some programs might be set up to help "needy" farmers; the "needy" to be identified by the Grange.

The immediate concern was liability. While the Vermont YCC, had the necessary liability insurance, its young people could not work on privately-owned land.

The SCA also had liability insurance, but was over-extended and running low on funds. But what they were talking about was putting two college students on one "needy" farm for a full 12-week summer to be a "hired hand," the thought being it would take two students to make one farm helper.

Cynthia left the meeting eager to find a Vermont based group to move onto a farm for a five-day period providing special service in a concentrated form.

And the Grange members turned to the Extension Service for help in identifying "needy" Vermonters, deciding finally to serve those with some physical handicap.

Cynthia turned to the Farm & Wilderness Camps in Plymouth, Vermont, and they quickly agreed to pull together 8 campers of high school age with two college-age leaders to meet the needs of a single farmer for a concentrated five-day week.

Memo #17-87, dated 16 November reads: Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear -- Is this an impossible task?"

The Atlanta Public Schools (this is not a non sequitur) have mandated that every high school student do community service which is approved by the school district office. And the United Way provides that office with a loose leaf (updated on regular schedule) notebook listing all approved agencies and job openings.

There is no organization in Vermont which has pulled together similar information by county, by town, or by school district.

We know because we have searched and searched!

But there are all sorts of organizations which know "some" programs.

And throughout much of 1987, Lisanne and Cynthia valiantly tried to find a group interested enough in having this data on call to help them compile 66 notebooks, one for each academic high school in the state.

We thought we could give grants to local 4-H groups, and they would do the necessary calling and investigating. Didn't work.

We thought the United Way might do it. No.

We thought R.S.V.P. might take it on. No, thank you.

We got a lot of help from VIVA (Vermonters in Volunteer Administration), and Lisanne finally got some 100 job descriptions in Chittenden County, and made up several notebooks for distribution in the fall at our SerVermont workshops.

As 1987 ends, we have given out 25 "Help Needed" SerVermont Notebooks, and invited student groups in the 25 secondary schools to find as many agencies and students service jobs as possible. And we have promised that SerVermont will award $100 for each 100 entries to the student group which sends SerVermont a duplicate set.

The $100 to be used by the students to defray expenses for a community project.

But what if a student group does find 100 placements? How to keep the notebook updated? Where to keep the notebook so

They carry the necessary liability insurance for their own work projects, so that was no problem. Also, with about 35 campers to choose from, they were able to make the effort fully voluntary.

Accordingly, in late July ten young people went right up to the Canadian border to help a farm family, the husband of whom had had heart surgery and was not supposed to do any lifting.

The students slept crowded into a milk shed, and from dawn to dusk did as many of the summer's farm chores as possible. Evenings, the farmer and his wife hitched up the Belgian team, loaded the wagon with hay and Farm & Wilderness campers, and went calling to fellow friends and farmers.

Cynthia went up on the second day to ask the farm family how it was working and was greeted with euphoria.

Then Cynthia waited for a few weeks before asking the teenagers about the experience to let the novelty wear off. But wear off it would not -- they were enthusiastic, and those who had not participated in the 1987 "SerVermont Farm Project" had already asked to sign up for the following summer!

Cynthia would love to find a way to combine high school and college students into work teams to serve needy farmers spring, summer and fall. Say, to have a team expert in fence mending; another team in light maintenance; and a third learning how to rebuild foundations for barns and other out buildings.

Perhaps a new initiative just in the talking stage -- A Vermont Farm Corps -- will become the vehicle for such a program. And perhaps the legislation could change for the VYCC, so that private farmers could be accommodated along with state and federal lands.

The SerVermont Inventory

Frustration. Hours and hours and hours and hours and frustration. Memo #1-87, dated 9 January, stated that Lisanne, SerVermont's Intern, would spend 75% of her time on this inventory, and that we would provide each school district with a notebook outlining all possible student community service jobs.

that interested students can use it? Should there be space for student reactions? And how to make judgments about places suitable (or not) for students?

Cynthia thought the inventory of all Vermont's non-profit agencies would be an easy task, and that by now the material would be on a statewide available computer system.

A school like Burr & Burton in Manchester, has such a listing...they require community service for graduation, hence every single possible job available in the area for student volunteers is known to the service coordinator, and is on their computer system.

How to interest the other 65 secondary schools in having a similar listing; and to have such a listing both used and reused?

One significant problem is the nonprofit agencies and the local government organizations. They either do not think they want student volunteers, or if they do want them, it is not for them to do interesting jobs, but to either do "busywork" or fundraising.

Also, a number of the secondary schools which encourage student community service do so one by one; that is, they only think of jobs to be done singly by one student. Yet students love to work together in small groups. For the local selectmen to think of group jobs, or for the local nursing home, this is a radical change from the usual, and therefore, without some impetus from the schools and the students, such opportunities seldom -- or never -- surface.

Like What?

This is the working title of a booklet Cynthia had expected to have written in 1987.

"Like What?" is what she's asked whenever she suggests to a school authority that students might do community service. Also the same question an agency asks when approached about using student volunteers.

There is a good booklet which touches on these matters now available through the Independent Sector (1828 L Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20036): "Youth Service: A Guidebook for

Developing and Operating Effective Programs," written by the husband and wife team of Dan Conrad and Diane Hedin.

Cynthia has renamed her book -- target date for publication is now 31 March 1988 -- "SerVermont and the USA."

It is to be in four parts. The first called "Like What?" answering that question in general. Then one part geared toward school officials explaining what they can do to expedite matters; another part geared to students exhorting them to work out exciting service programs; and the final section for nonprofit agencies exploring with them creative ways to use student volunteers, particularly in jobs which enhance and support the academic curriculum.

While "SerVermont and the USA" will deal primarily with Vermont examples, there will be information from around the US, and every effort will be made to have the information as useful in Seattle as in Bangor; in Miami as in San Diego; in Burlington as in New Orleans.

Fund Raising

A goodly amount of time had to be spent finding continued support for SerVermont. The Vermont Community Foundation -- brand under the able leadership of David Rahr -- invited SerVermont to be among its very first grant recipients.

And Ben & Jerry's invited a proposal.

The Turrell Fund needed a little persuading to piggy-back on the 1986 provision, assuring Cynthia of sufficient funding ($10,000) to plan fall projects.

The Vemont Community Foundation decided to tie its grant to the proposed teachers' workshops (more later on these), and gave $2,500 for this purpose.

The Windham Foundation was asked for $15,000, but gave only $1,000. This meant that no mini-grant projects could be offered to student groups in the 66 schools. Also meant there were no funds to hire an intern, leaving Cynthia with all the clerking work to do.

Cynthia used the $1,000, and more, to hire Lisanne Dooman in the fall to help organize and run what were scheduled to be five teachers' workshops, but which turned out to be only 3.

The request to Ben & Jerry Foundation for $10,000 was rejected, with an invitation to reapply for a January 1, 1988 deadline. This has been done.

As of December, 1987, funds raised for June 1, 1987 - 31 May 1988, were $13,500. And as of 1 December 1987, some $5,453.25 had been spent, most of it for the holding of the workshops and the production of the 25 inventory notebooks.

That leaves a little more than $8,000 for the next six months, about $1,000 of which will be spent to produce and distribute this second-year report, and $5,500 may be spent for teacher-sponsored integrated community service activities, and another $2,000 is promised to support the creation of 20 inventory or "Help Needed" SerVermont notebooks.

Fortunately, a separate grant direct to Cynthia Parsons provides support for the production of "SerVermont and the USA."

A teacher in New Mexico, hearing Cynthia talk about SerVermont at a conference in Andover, MA, in October, has asked to spend a month during a fully-paid sabbatical in Vermont helping Cynthia.

It's possible, as well, that a volunteer intern will work for and with Cynthia from Johnson State College.

Without the $10,000 from Ben & Jerry's, and unless more funds are forthcoming from the Windham Foundation and the Vermont Community Foundation, SerVermont will not be able to offer mini grants in 1988.

Instead, the effort may have to be concentrated in visits by Cynthia to school faculty meetings, exploring with teachers ways to integrate student community service by individuals and groups with the regular academic curriculum.

Cynthia tried to put together an ACTION grant, but was not able at the last minute to get the help she needed to meet their specifications.

Service Learning/Teachers' Workshops

As Cynthia explored student community service activities nationwide, she became more and more interested in service-learning; that is in service integrated with learning, not as an enhancer, but as integral the one with the other.

She decided to hold five regional workshops in the fall, and at each to explore ways that interested teachers could try out service-learning projects.

And the Vermont Community Foundation, in support particularly of that initiative, provided $2,500, with $500 allocated for each of the workshops. That is, $500 would be available to the teachers to help defray "extra" costs for their chosen service-learning projects.

First mistake was to schedule the workshops for Saturday mornings. No one wanted to "give up" his/her precious day off. And althought one Saturday did bring four teachers from three schools, the next scheduled Saturday brought forth not one participant.

The workshops were rescheduled with 12 teachers at Johnson State on a school day (time off given by their principals), and eight teachers at Middlebury on another school day.

The discussions at all three sessions were lively, and deep interest was expressed about how to weave academics and service together.

For example, a history teacher in a small high school with no art teacher, invited a quilt maker to come to school and talk with the history class about the design for a quilt.

An architect also was invited to come to the same class, and took the students on tours around town to help them begin to understand and appreciate the different building designs of 100 and 200 years ago.

The class made a video tape of what they learned; they also produced a magnificent quilt featuring some of the more distinctive buildings in town.

The quilt, in a community ceremony, was presented to the local public library where it hangs in a prominent location.

As the teacher explained to fellow teachers how the class work was woven in and around the service activities, there was general appreciation for this type of active academics.

Another teacher explained how he had told his environmental science class that they had an opportunity to have a grant of $200 for a community project, and let the class decide on what they wanted most to do.

Out of this came the decision to plant a fresh strain of elm seedlings (Dutch Elm disease resistant) around town, but to first divide up the class into investigative groups to find out where the elms should be planted.

This called for a study of what had killed the elms that had once grown in the town; and called for research into old pictures to find where elm trees had once been planted.

Each student wrote a short paper about what the planting of the elm seedlings meant to him/her. We'll share just one.

I am very pleased with the way the tree planting turned out. I believe the trees will very positively add to the beauty of our town. I think it was a great chance for one class to do something for our community. I believe the program was well worth it. I only hope the trees will make it. Stuart A.

We're assured by the teacher that each seedling is being given a lot of attention, not only by this year's environmental science students, but from last year's class as well.

One junior high school group looked around the country to find service agencies which would help in time of need; they learned how to interview; and produced a booklet full of graphics and good advice which they shared with students from other nearby junior high schools.

From the table of contents: Under the heading, Addison County Community Action Group, the students have written, "Here's a place to live if you run away." Of the Humane Society they ask, "Do you want to buy a pet? Or get rid of one you already have?" And of the Court Diversion program, "For first offenders -- a chance to clear your record."

These junior high students learned about interviewing; learned how to write clear, vivid prose, learned how to put material on the computer, learned how to produce computer graphics, learned how to space material on a page, learned the art of compilation, and brought their community closer to their peers.

There has been a longtime tendency for student service to be thought of as self-development or self-appreciation. This seems particularly true of college-level programs. But the SerVermont thrust has been to see the integration of academics and service as true service-learning with self-worth a by-product, and not the main event.

One example of this is a special effort made by Lisanne, the SerVermont intern. In the weeks before Christmas she went to several Chittenden County secondary schools looking for students to volunteer time helping elderly nursing home residents handle calls from young children on a "Ho Ho Hotline."

The few students who volunteered found that they loved being considered the "experts" to help the elderly with children's queries. A note from Lisanne sent 17 December reported, "Kids I worked with last year on the Ho Ho Hotline liked it so much that they are doing it again this year -- 20 of them!"

English teachers have found their compositions written about the experience to be particularly well thought out and crafted.

Conferences and More Conferences

Because SerVermont was both new and visionary, Cynthia accepted invitations to speak at several. The first of the year was held at Bard College on January 27-28. The title: "School, College and Society: The Place of Service in the Curriculum and Institutional Life."

It was an exciting mix of dedicated people, all of whom were involved in student community service at the school or college level. The overarching question discussed for two days was, "Why link service to learning?"

On February 21, began the planning with Richard Gross of a conference to be held in Andover, MA in October, organized to begin a New England network dealing with school-sponsored community service/learning.

On March 12th Cynthia talked about SerVermont with the Vermont United Way chairpersons.

The next was March 14th in Columbia, South Carolina where Cynthia was the banquet speaker for the SCEA. They asked for a report on student service and particularly on SerVermont. Very good and warm response.

On March 28th, Cynthia testified (See documents section) before the U.S. House Committee on Education and Labor's subcommittee on Human Resources. Again, strong interest in SerVermont.

July 8-11, attended the national conference of the Education Commission of the States, and served on a community service panel with several others, including Ernie Boyer. A small group attending, but special interest by a Connecticut legislator who has followed up with a bill in the Connecticut Legislature dealing with SerVermont-like activities.

On May 6th, spoke at Lawrence academy about SerVermont and service-learning.

July 29, at Johnson State College, met with a group to advise Johnson on ways to integrate service-learning in connection with their ACTION grant.

September 9, chaired a panel of 4-H college students discussing service-learning.

September 15, began once-a-month meetings with the Thomas Jefferson forum, a collaborative effort in Massachusetts for service-learning.

October 2, the beginning of discussions for a Serve Scottsdale (Arizona) program akin to that of SerVermont spearheaded there by Betty Brunn, a member of the Scottsdale Citizens Council.

October 14-17, with the Experiential and Cooperative Education movements with full discussion and several panels

dealing with SerVermont and the issue of service-learning in general.

October 24, with the Associated Press of New England to discuss education coverage in general and student community service as a progressive movement.

October 31, the Andover Conference devoted solely to service-learning.

November 2, Cambridge, MA, community service as part of juvenile diversion in corrections. Not a speaker.

November 3, Washington, D.C., national and community service and the conscientious objection movement. Not a speaker.

December 14, explore with Dick May at Norwich University Cynthia's participation on the Peace Corps advisory committee.

Reflections

The first new request from a school for an integrated academic/service project has come in from People's Academy, Morrisville, and has each honor society student hosting a single local senior citizen for a time at school following a lunch. A good mix of having the students find the classes interested in what the senior citizens have to share.

There are several projects now in operation whereby the older residents are being asked to share their knowledge in ways which augment classroom reading and discussion.

And a goodly number of programs whereby the students seek ways to help the elderly and needy in their communities.

One wonders why every school is not looking for these exchanges; for these ways to help students see the purpose being learning to write clear sentences, know what history means, feel the power of math and science, etc.

Very curious that student service is part and parcel of some schools, and no part of others. Also curious that all social studies teachers don't include community service as "lab work" for students, in the same way that drama teachers put on plays and music teachers perform concerts.

The State Department of Education, as part of its goals for secondary schools, is expecting some integration of community service and social studies instruction...this will be a fundamental and radical change for many of Vermont's 66 secondary schools.

LOOKING AHEAD

Project Graduation

A few of Vermont's secondary schools have initiated alcohol-free, all-night parties for the graduating seniors following commencement ceremonies. This movement is called "Project Graduation."

With encouragement from several SerVermont supporters, we're considering offering mini-grants to student groups so that they can plan such parties.

We know we'd like the planning grant for "Project Graduation" to go to a student group. We know the planning group should consist of about five students, a school official, and a town official.

But we're wondering about stating that we want the planning group to include, as well, a college freshman; that is, a last year's graduate of the secondary school now in college.

And we're also wondering if we should offer grants ($100) to all 66 academic secondary schools, or whether we should target those schools which have not received any SerVermont mini grant funds.

Of course, one immediate problem is funds. Without the Ben & Jerry grant, we will be strapped. But then, it's back to the Windham Foundation, and perhaps one or two other available funding sources in the state.

SerVermont and the USA

When this booklet is written and published, it is our plan to send five to each of the 66 schools, and to enclose a letter stating that sometime in 1988, should a group of teachers wish, that Cynthia would come to school to talk with all the teachers at a faculty meeting, or to a sub set of interested teachers, about the ideas in the book. Particularly ways that the school and those teachers might introduce community service for some or all pupils which would directly support and enhance regular curriculum offerings.

If the booklet is ready on time, it will be on sale (we are hoping to keep the cost down to $5/copy, with an extra $1 for postage and handling) at the VIVA annual conference; in this way, it will be introduced to all the major nonprofit service organizations in the state.

For help in distribution nationwide, we are hoping to interest the United Way to help out. After all, it is their members which would benefit most both in the short and long run if school students turned to their member organizations to volunteer their services.

And we would, of course, provide the major mass media with review copies.

We also will ask Independent Sector if they can help with distribution, as we believe "SerVermont and the USA" to be a companion volume to the Hedin's "Youth Service Guidebook."

The Making of Small 'd' Democrats

Cynthia hopes to complete, in 1988, a book exploring just why all young people in the US should not only be given community service opportunities while in school, but be urged to give some time before the age of 26 to national service either in the military or in a civilian occupation, either within the US or abroad.

Her position on the "making of small 'd' democrats" is that our public schools have three main functions. The teaching of basic skills, career and job exploration, and citizenship training for our democratic form of government.

The United States of America is not just a representative democracy, but requires participatory democracy to operate within our constitutional mandate.

And our public schools -- the one compulsory provision for every budding citizen -- have the charge to "make" or train all of the nation's small 'd' democrats, each one of whom has the same political power as the other.

Something more than civics instruction about the form of democratic governance is needed; and community service tied in with all academics -- but particularly with history, social

studies, and citizenship instruction -- is an essential part of the curriculum for this teaching to be meaningful.

We weren't a very good participatory democracy for more than 100 years when we didn't provide every child with free public schooling, and we didn't permit all citizens to vote.

We're still struggling with ways to provide equal opportunities and schooling for all citizens regardless of what kind of home and community into which they are born or move.

And even though the vote is free today for all US citizens, more than half don't use this ticket to a free democracy, strangling the process of equal representation as strongly -- if not more strongly -- than it was throttled when all women were not allowed to vote and all men and women of color were not only not given the vote but not even counted as a whole person.

The gap in our public school offerings between the rich and the poor has grown in the past decade, not closed.

Home and family life has deteriorated alarmingly.

Hostility between the "haves" and "have nots" threatens every community, tearing apart the fabric of mutual governance which is basic to our American democracy.

Our school children should not be isolated from their community, nor taught to believe that rule by the few is superior to governance by "we the people."

Community service done by all students is a small, but vitally important, step in the creating of alert, intelligent, and active citizens.

SerVermont is Scaffolding

What's been fascinating since the inception of SerVermont is the fact that when student groups and teachers have been urged to consider a project and offered embarrassingly small funding to help defray out-of-pocket expenses, the ideas which have come forth have been special -- even unique.

The students and their teachers have looked at their communities, assessed needs, and moved to help meet those needs in very exciting and brave ways. In fresh ways.

Many a school-based community service project in Vermont -- whether helped by SerVermont or not -- is very special. Is very local. Is different from any other community service project.

We suspect that's the case across the nation, particularly where school and town officials agree that community service is part of schooling; part of growing up in that particular community.

SerVermont is not calling for nor hoping to create a community service graduation requirement.

SerVermont is not expecting schools to give a Carnegie -- or any other -- unit or credit for XXX hours of completed community service.

Cynthia likes to say, when the issue of voluntary or mandatory service is debated, "that it is difficult to learn to volunteer in a mandatory program."

SerVermont is scaffolding. And some schools hardly need any rehab at all to make community service integral to the school curriculum; others will require that the scaffolding stay in place and continue to recommend options for years to come.

SerVermont doesn't want the Honor Society or leaders in student government to stop doing community service, but it doesn't want community service to be seen as the province of those few students.

Nor does SerVermont want to stop the diversion program for juvenile offenders which mandates XXX hours of community service instead of incarceration in a jail or prison.

But SerVermont doesn't want service and punishment to be seen as "the same thing."

SerVermont doesn't want working in a gas station, clerking in a store, or doing paid errands for a neighbor, to be confused with voluntary service for a department of local government or a nonprofit public or private agency.

Nor does SerVermont want helping organizations to use students just for fund raising or janitorial chores without sharing with these students what the need is they are meeting or giving

the students an opportunity to suggest ways of solving a special need.

SerVermont doesn't want service counted by hours, but trusts the "counter" to be:

needs met,

love shared,

problems solved,

self-worth for all improved,

and participatory democracy realized.

DOCUMENTS

SerVermont

Students in Community Service

19 January 1987

TO: Jeane Baker, Stephen Kaagan, Carol Todd, Reva Spengler,Donn McCafferty, and Lisanne Dooman

FR: Cynie Parsons

RE: SerVermont (Memo #2-87)

Year-End Report

i. Budget Industries in Chester has been printing the book, and so carefully that they have found typos that not only I missed (I'm not good at typo finding even with 15 years experience at The Christian Science Monitor!), but a good copy reader missed.

ii. Cover will have green ink; inside report will be black ink on a kind of ivory or off-white paper. You will recognize the type, as all has been printed on my computer/printer for camera-ready transmission onto paper plates.

iii. It will be finished this week. And, again, I feel that this book is an important contribution to the growing literature on youth service.

iv. May I count on Jeanne Baker seeing that "SerVermont - The First Year: 1986" gets into the Vermont Library system? I will send a copy to the Library of Congress.

v. And will Gov. Kunin and Commissioner Kaagan see to it that all interested members of her Administration and all appropriate legislators, etc. receive copies?

vi. Lisanne Dooman will send a copy to each of the 66 schools with which we've been working; to some out-of-state special contacts; to some out-of-state media such as Readers Digest; and will send five copies to each of the foundations which have supported SerVermont.

vii. Retail cost per/copy is $8.00, and is marked on the report. Also, last page of the report is a tear-out order form. Those ordering copies must pay $1.25 postage for the first copy and $.50 for each additional copy.

viii. Both Commissioner Kaagan and Governor Kunin pay only the wholesale cost of $5.00/copy for more copies than the 25 each will receive gratis from SerVermont.

Cynthia Parsons, Coordinator, P.O. Box 516, Chester, VT 05143 802/875-2278

Roy, Edith and Mary Simpson

ix. As most of you may remember, I worked with Mary Simpson, a college junior, last summer while she earned course credit for helping SerVermont inventory Windsor County. Her parents have given SerVermont a gift (stock transfer and liquidation) of $841.17.

x. In his gracious note to the Simpson's, Alan Weiss (representing Vermont College which is administering all SerVermont funds) wrote:

> *The funds will be used to support SerVermont activities which encourage students to serve their communities. Small sums, about $200 each, are awarded to high schools to cover the expenses of administering their programs. Some 45 schools will participate. If only ten (10) students in each school are involved, your gift will directly benefit 450 young men and women. On behalf of these students, please accept our 'Thank you.'*

xi. In addition, on the 13th of January, the Simpsons had a dinner party for me, and invited five influential philanthropists deeply involved in progressive education activities. One I had met two years before and enlisted her help to "get" to Vice President and Mrs. Bush with my position paper on MANAGING NATIONAL SERVICE.

xii. She was not able to interest Bush contacts in Connecticut in a program calling for a new federal agency to oversee youth service nationwide. And so she was particularly interested to hear about SerVermont, and its growth in just a little over a year. She nearly had me convinced by the end of the evening that we should be applauding. (Just a short burst is all I allow...no way near to a standing ovation!)

xiii. But it was good to have the five guests and Roy and Edith Simpson asking some hard and pertinent questions, not the least of which is: "But are you the sole source of support? And if so, then you're not doing it right."

New York Area Foundations Panel on Children

xiv. The Edwin Gould Foundation for Children invited me to be the sandwich luncheon speaker at the regular bi-monthly meeting of a group of foundation officials particularly interested in helping children, especially disadvantaged children. This was held around the conference table on Jan. 14, at the Gould Foundation.

xv. Carl Fjellman of the Turrell Fund (one of SerVermont's funders) attended, two from Gould, and nine others. Again, an excellent session.

xvi. I was asked by Tom Brown of the Merrill Lynch Foundation if I could be sure that students doing community service were, in fact, reaching my goal of a deeper understanding of the meaning and responsibilities of citizenship in a democracy. "No," was my short answer. The longer is, that without the involvement, I'm sure the connections are not made.

xvii. And, of course, the question was asked about how SerVermont can be "institutionalized" or made a part of the school system.

xviii. Jury, for me, is still out on this question. While the Department of Education is set up as a regulatory agency (pattern exists almost universally throughout the 50 states with a few adaptations), it is almost impossible to put a service within its structure.

xix. Clearly I need to explore this facet of SerVermont's management, control, and administration with as much vigor as I've explored ways to get the schools involved in involving students in community service.

xx. Was I correct to put the involvement before the structure? I think so...still think so a year later...

SerVermont's Teachers

xxi. Thrilled to report that the proposals from teachers in schools all around the state are coming in, and looks as though we'll have a strenuous time deciding which projects do (and do not) get SerVermont mini-grant funding. I suspect we'll be able to fund about 10 of them.

xxii. I'm going to call on Carol Todd, Alan Weiss, Lisanne, and myself to do the choosing after all proposals have been submitted.

Boston Globe & Black River Tribune

xxiii. Excellent articles on SerVermont. Sunday 11 January in the Boston Globe, and Wednesday 14 January in the Black River Tribune -- a weekly in Ludlow with distribution throughout most of Windsor County.

xxiv. I copied both, placing them back to front on a single large sheet of paper, and sent to SerVermont's special friends such as the foundations, Alec Dickson, Kaagan and Kunin, etc.

xxv. In discussion with Beth Burgess about the articles, she suggested that one day she should go with me or Lisanne when we're visiting schools with active programs so that she can take some pictures. That will be marvelous.

xxvi. It may be that SerVermont, later this school year, should hire a professional news photographer to provide us with a set of pictures of students doing community service. We might think about something of this nature when we get ready to give the awards for the service by student groups.

Vermont State Grange

xxvii. I met Saturday 17 January with the Executive Committee of the Vermont State Grange at the invitation of its Master, Margaret Richardson. Reason was to explore a joint venture with the Grange, the Student Conservation Association, the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps, and SerVermont.

xxviii. What we would do is put together small teams of college and high school students under a leader who would go from farm to farm meeting such needs as: fence mending; foundation improvement; and light maintenance.

xxix. The Grange would pick the farmers with the greatest need. SCA would assemble the teams, provide the necessary equipment, handle the liability issues, pick and train the leaders, etc.

xxx. All still to be worked out, but a first step was knowing whether the Grange was interested in participating. Next step is working up a proposal with SCA as the primary recipient, with sub-contract to SerVermont for its participation with high school students. Lisanne, our Intern, would undoubtedly be the first leader in a pilot project.

xxxi. For example, she might lead a team of five students (three college and two secondary school) who would work three weekends for a single farmer mending a section of fence. Farmer would house and feed the team.

The Inventory

xxxii. Lisanne's Questionnaire is getting good response, so now looking for a way to reach every country. Meeting Monday 19 January with a 4-H representative to explore their participation.

SerVermont

Students In Community Service

March 28, 1987

TO: Judy Stephany, Stephen Kaagan, Carol Todd, Reva Spengler, Donn McCafferty, Lisanne Dooman

FR: Cynie Parsons

RE: SerVermont (Memo #8-87)

Testimony By Cynthia Parsons, SerVermont Coordinator, Before The U.S. House Committee On Education And Labor's Subcommittee On Human Resources, In Montpelier, Vermont, On 28 March 1987, Dealing With Ways America's School Students, As Community Volunteers, Can Be Encouraged And Assisted To Help Our Nation's Seniors.

I am very grateful for the invitation from Jim Jeffords to come and both listen and present testimony before this distinguished and important committee.

For the past three years, after 14 years as education editor of The Christian Science Monitor and an equal number of years as a classroom teacher, I have been exploring ways for our nation to provide a time of national service for all youth between the ages of 16 and 26, giving particular attention to the need to care for our senior citizens.

Just as we need a defense force made up of volunteers this age, so we need a human welfare force drawing on the energy, talents, enthusiasm, and career interests of this age group.

I would have the federal government provide post-secondary financial grants (ala the GI Bill) from what I call a Service Bill, rewarding 1,000 hours of community service done after age 16 and before age 26 with a $5,000 GI Bill like payment for post-secondary schooling. I would reward 2,000 (or more) hours of community service with a promise of $10,000 of education funding.

But before the average American grows to consider as "normal" a period of national service, our schools need to support and encourage voluntary service by students.

Here in Vermont, for the past 15 months, I have been travelling from one academic secondary school to the next (66 of them) suggesting that groups of students choose a member of the school faculty or administration and a local senior citizen to think through with them what the students could do to help improve the lives of the local rural elderly.

Cynthia Parsons, Coordinator, P.O. Box 516, Chester, VT 05143 802/875-2278

With private foundation money, SerVermont has been able to offer student groups up to $200 to defray out-of-pocket expenses.

Two groups of students now offer to do household chores on request for any senior citizen in town. Three (possibly four) student groups have invited seniors for a special meal at school combined with some special entertainment.

Recently one high school held a "Break the Winter Blues" meal for local elderly.

A 5th grade class (in tiny Concord, VT, with one school for all grades) "adopted" a 10-bed senior home, and the students have not only visited with the residents, written to them, sent them cards and made cards for them to send to friends, but also sent along a tape recorder and some clear tapes asking the residents to tell what they remember being told about the Civil War when they were 10 and 11 years old.

When all the teachers in Vermont were offered an opportunity by SerVermont to apply for up to $300 to defray expenses for a student community service project connected with course work, several excellent projects were chosen.

To cite just a few:

Two schools (Bellows Free Academy in Fairfax, and Canaan Memorial High) have students interviewing local elderly residents for the purpose of compiling local histories.

Cabot High School is producing both a calendar and some post cards depicting scenes of young and old working and playing together in the community.

Students in Townshend from industrial arts, biology, and health classes are building both an aviary and an aquarium in each of two local senior center/nursing homes. Health class students will study how the introduction of pets effect the seniors; biology students will stock and maintain the environments, as well as carry out experiments with the help of resident observers. And, of course, the industrial arts students -- with plenty of kibbitzing we're sure -- will do the actual construction.

I mention the actual projects because they are so exciting and innovative; also because too many agencies, when offered volunteer help by school students often offer jobs which keep the students too far removed from our older Americans.

Talk to these kids and they will tell you that what thrills them, if they deliver a Thanksgiving dinner to an older person living alone, is the look on that person's face when he or she sees the dinner.

And it's that five or ten minutes of conversation as the youngster learns to appreciate the contribution of the older fellow community member. Students can sweep floors and file papers and answer phones and carry messages around

a building, but that's not what really helps our senior citizens; and it should not be the first use of these lively, fresh, exciting young people.

Too often our youngsters are asked only to help raise funds - and never given the opportunity to suggest how those funds might be expended to meet the needs of the cause for which they have labored.

Or too often they are asked to do menial chores, actually far removed from any direct contact or care.

Yet, there is enormous evidence that contact with school-age youngsters is a tonic of the first order for older citizens, particularly those who live alone.

Let me suggest some program thrusts as you consider how the federal government can better serve older Americans:

- Grants to school districts so they can provide essential funding for student groups with sound community service projects to meet one or more specific community needs, particularly for the elderly.
- Grants to school districts so they can provide essential funding for one or more teachers who want to combine classroom work with student community service, particularly direct service to meet a local human need.
- Grants to state departments of education to set up Service Funds to reward 1,000 or more hours of community service done by 16-25 year-old with up to $5,000 in tuition credits applicable in approved post-secondary institutions.
- Grants to local government agencies (e.g. police, fire, parks, recreation) so that they can initiate projects using student volunteers to improve community offerings for older Americans.
- Funding for the placement of Service Agents (recruitment and counseling specialists) in each U.S. secondary school whose task it would be to find local, state, national, or international placements in non-profit service agencies for both in-school students and out-of-school youth up to age 26.

Attachments:
"SerVermont -- The First Year 1986"
SerVermont Brochure
SerVermont's Seniors flyer
SerVermont Memorandum
Re: SerVermont's Teachers' Mini-grant Winners

-end-

I spent Wednesday 25 March in New York City at the Edwin Gould Foundation for Children discussing the possibility of having Alec Dickson visit the U.S. for two weeks in late October to both serve the needs of the Gould Foundation and their Lakeside (a correctional center for teenagers) project, and

the needs of SerVermont if we are able to hold the anticipated five regional teachers' meetings to discuss ways the teachers can integrate student community service with their course work.

I will be meeting in London with Alec in late April, and have been given permission by S.M. Meyer, Jr., president of the Gould Foundation, to explore the possibilities with Alec.

I spent Friday morning at U-32 High School outside Montpelier meeting with student groups and holding an assembly all dealing in some ways with student service.

Lisanne: Listen Up! A vigorous description from several students about kinds of service they had done, a declaration that they would rather do service in small groups and the service which would have them working directly with people rather than mowing lawns or filing papers, etc. And a huge YAWN at the mention of whether doing service had, in their minds, any connection with citizenship in our particular nation.

Asked a dozen seniors, all honor students, all doers of community service, if the state were to hold an awards contest and reward for student service, would they prefer that individual students get awards, or that it be groups of students -- anything from a pair to a whole student body. Not one student wanted an individual award; all thought such a contest, if done every year and given to 2-3 schools, would be wonderful and give incentive for schools all over the state to do more than they do not.

Regarding Funds: We have spent all Commonwealth Fund monies; all Turrell Fund monies; nearly all the grant from the Simpsons; and Lisanne's recent school visits will be charged to the Hazen funds. Estimate that we will complete the funding year (June 1, 1987) with about $1,500; or possibly as much as $500 less if we are able to complete and distribute the anticipated 66 notebooks.

SerVermont

Students in Community Service

9 October 1987

TO: Judy Stephany, Steve Kaagan, Carol Todd, Reva Spengler, Donn McCafferty

FR: Cynie Parsons

RE: SerVermont Activities (Memo #15, 1987)

Regional Workshops

i. Saturday mornings are a bust. September 26 was the date of the workshop at Dartmouth. Not one of the 11 schools had anyone who wanted to come, so it was not held.

ii. Lisanne Dooman/Hegman called every single school more than once in an effort to reach whoever might be interested.

iii. Some principals just tore the checks off the memo and threw it away. Others tore the check off, and announced the opportunity at staff meeting; or forgot to mention it at staff meeting.

iv. And so for the next letters, we got them out sooner, mentioned that those who attended would have $500 in mini-grant funds to use for special projects, and Lisanne began calling sooner to make sure memo and check had arrived and teachers been notified.

v. What she learned, talking this time with the 19 schools invited to come to Johnson State, was that Saturday was the WRONG DAY.

vi. Principal after principal told Lisanne that if the workshop was held during the week, he/she would let at least one teacher go and "cover" for him/her.

New Regional Workshop Schedule

vii. Therefore, we cancelled the October 10, workshop at Johnson State and will, instead, schedule three school days. And Lisanne will work with the contacts at Johnson State, UVM, and Middlebury.

viii. I've asked Lisanne to see about Nov. 10, 11, and 12 (Tue./Wed./Thur.) as three possible dates for the workshops.

ix. Lisanne and I will meet Oct. 12, in Burlington and go over a revised letter. I will, as well, write mileage checks for the remaining schools.

Cynthia Parson, Coordinator, P.O. Box 516, Chester, VT 05143 802/875-2278

Staff Meetings

x. Because I think the notion of integrating service with academics is a good one, and because I don't think there are many sources available to teachers to explore this concept, and because I learn from each school encounter, I am going to have Lisanne send a letter to every one of the 66 academic secondary schools offering to invite me during the month of December to come to a faculty meeting to discuss the concept.

xi. I can't, of course, go to all 66 schools in what will probably be about 14 school days, but then, sorry to say, I doubt that I'll ever hear back from 1/3, and that probably only a handful will extend the invitation.

xii. I'll offer in the memo to have available some mini-grant funds for special projects as a bit of inducement.

Credits and Hours

xiii. As I do more and more of this service-learning exploration, I hear about more and more voluntary service done by school kids with no integration at all with academics other than, in a few cases, the giving of school credit.

xiv. I just think it's shortsighted in the extreme to give school credit for something, and then not use that something as part of civics or English or... Part of the problem, of course, is the view agencies have of how to use voluntary student labor.

xv. Too much busy work; too much doing of mindless chores; too much fund-begging. But even those traditional chores could be used by clever teachers to support classrooms study. Would serve all agencies who ask kids to solicit funds, if the students did budget analysis of the organization for a math class!

National Interest in Student Community Service

xvi. On the rise. Had an "emergency" request from the Milwaukee Public Schools for a copy of "SerVermont -- The First Year 1986." Some 50 school districts have written or called in the past six months asking for the book and saying they were exploring ways to have more student community service programs.

xvii. The Youth Service America Group in DC, attempting to be the national center for youth service, has embraced the continuing efforts of Don Eberly (supporting national service for more than 30 years) and together with some church groups particularly interested in alternative to military service are holding a major national conference in early November exploring ways to expand youth service in schools, colleges, and for young adults. Several Congressmen will be there looking for support for bills dealing with national service.

xvii. At the same time, the alternative to jail community service workers are meeting at a national conference in Boston. They state their reason for meeting:

A challenge for efficiency and effectiveness has been issued to community service programs, nonprofit and public agencies utilizing these workers, and the justice system, as a growing need for volunteers, public demands for restitution and wide-spread jail overcrowding challenge limited resources.

Community service is offered (or perhaps even court-assigned) for drunk drivers, felons, and juvenile offenders throughout the US.

What I find interesting, in light of my desire that student community service be integrated with academics, is that justice officials are calling for community service done by offenders to be part of their restitution; that is, in my language, an integration of a way of doing with a way of thinking so that a productive civic life is used intelligently.

xix. I think these two conferences are so important that I am going to both necessitating quick travel from Burlington (where I teach a course in writing) to Boston to Washington and back to Burlington all in two days!

In Addition

xx. COOL is working with VISTA/ACTION to put on a four-day training program for the 80 college-level recipients of ACTION Service-Learning Grants and has asked me to be part of the training staff. This represents a very serious commitment to student community service nationwide. I'm delighted. Also means I will have an enormous opportunity to explore with these 80 service-learning directors ways that the college and university students can help school students. There are, for example, some very exciting programs in drug and alcohol prevention combining these two age groups now in effect.

xxi. Also all the International Baccalauerate Schools have a community service requirement for the IB Degree, yet there has never been a North American conference for service-learning directors in these special colleges and universities. That's being corrected this January under the direction of Alec Dickson. I've been invited to participate on the staff. They are addressing such topics as:

- "Community service as an educational experience"
- "How to set up community service projects"
- "How to prepare students for community service"
- "How to integrate community service into the curriculum"

UGH

xxii. One would think, reading all this about conferences and workshops, that I loved nothing better than flying off to convention hotels, eating rubberized chicken, and listening to repetitive speakers. NOT SO! but there's some gain for me from having a chance to talk with many concerned people in one place

at one time. And I suppose until I have my two books done, I will do more not less of this!

"SerVermont and the USA"

xxii. Have pretty muchly decided the book I'm working on to help any school, teacher, student, or organization make wise use of student volunteers, will be titled "SerVermont and the USA." The idea being, obviously, to draw heavily on what's been happening here in Vermont, but to make the program information applicable not just statewide but nationwide.

xxiv. I envision a four part book:

Part I - "Like What"
Giving a general overview of the why and how of student community service particularly in grades 7-12

Part II - "Attention: All School Officials"
Explaining how schools can integrate academics and student service; also how schools can use their resources to help get the students to and from service jobs.

Part III - "Attention: Not Just for Nerds"
Explaining that service is not for honor students only; or for honor students and delinquents. Addressing students' concerns, and suggesting practical ways for students to run their own programs or help shape those of the "traditional" sort.

Part IV - "Attention All Human Service Agencies"
Explaining how they might use students both individually and in small groups in academically-related service activities.

SerVermont

Students in Community Service

MEMORANDUM

9 November 1987

TO: Judy Stephany, Steve Kaagan, Carol Todd, Reva Spengler, Donn McCafferty

FR: Cynie Parsons

RE: SerVermont Activities (Memo #16, 1987)

Regional Workshops

i. It's working...we'll hold three workshops this week, school-day mornings at Johnson State, UVM, and Middlebury, Tue., Wed., Thur. The UVM comes on a school holiday so will have few takers; other two apparently well subscribed.

SerVermont Awards Program

ii. It's working...with Beth Burgess at the helm looks as though we will have legislators choosing student community service projects in each one's district, and that a group of judges will then choose 5-10 for statewide awards perhaps jointly given out by the Governor and the Chairman State Board of Education.

iii. I can't be involved in this project if I am to continue being the one person in the state untied to any "authority" suggesting that schools "do" service; and I think it best that I keep on thinking of ways to stimulate more service - particularly service related to academics.

iv. But what's not working is some mechanism in place either in the Governor's Administrative Offices or under the direction of the State Board of Education, with a modest budget, so that the program and the awards have continuity and integrity.

v. RECOMMENDATION: That the governor set aside $8,000. An intern receiving up to $4,000 be chosen through the University of Vermont's Center for Service Learning program to run the SerVermont Awards Contest during the Fall Semester, culminating during the 2nd week in January at the opening of the new Legislative Session. Remainder of funds to be spent on Awards, advertising, phone calls, printing, letters, etc. Or, may be that all the money needed (about $5,000) is for the intern, and that Administrative Offices budget can absorb all other costs.

Cynthia Parsons, Coordinator, P.O. Box 516, Chester, VT 05143 802/875-2278

New England Student Community Service Network

vi. Attached, a copy of my remarks given at the opening session. I, along with Mel King and Chick Harrison, was asked to answer two questions: What is community service? And why should high school students be involved in doing community service?

vii. There were about 150 participants, mostly from New England (one from Albuquerque!), split half and half private and public schools, most of whom were looking for ideas of how to improve, strengthen, widen, etc. student community service programs.

viii. The several SerVermont projects involving academics with service were of enormous interest. All of SerVermont's brochures disappeared, and the display copy of the year-end report got several good redings.

ix. Springfield, MA. The mayor has decreed and the school board has agreed. Every single pupil K-12 will do community service!!!! The folks from there were sponging up every possible way to proceed!

x. One aim of the conference is to create a living network...a kind of sharing pool. Richard Gross of Philipps Andover is the mainstay of this initiative. Looks to me as though it will move forward.

xi. Thos. Jeffrerson Forum paid for the conference, and TJ Coolidge seemed enormously pleased with the gains made during the conference.

xii. Not there, sadly, were representatives from state departments of education or large public school systems not yet involved in community service. How to reach the hard-to-reach similar to how to teach the hard-to-teach. Are they one and the same?

"SerVermont and the USA"

xiii. At the conference held at Smuggler's Notch by NSIEE, Gov. Kunin's address was, in many ways, the keynote. Her perceptive remarks about wedding activities to academics were referenced throughout the conference. And what I learned, over and over and over at that and the other three "national" conferences I have attended since Memo #15, is that a "recipe" book explaining how to solve the time, transportation, liability, and quality challenges is sorely needed.

xiv. I had hoped I would have a draft of "SerVermont and the USA" done by 31 December. I now have moved that forward at least a month.

NSIEE Conference, October 14-17

xv. Hal Woods and Joan Brough (and many others) did a fantastic job of organizing a very intensive service-learning experience for some 250 experiential educators. Hal, Joan, Liz Doyle from Johnson State, Ron Chesborough from Trinity, Mike Cronogue from St. Michael's, Dick May from Norwich and I were

joined by about 20 others the final morning of the conference in a workshop setting to discuss ways for us all to help and strengthen each other.

xvi. There was no doubt that we all feel a surge of power whenever someone encourages us; also that it makes a lot of sense for us to work together. Seems that UVM, Trinity, and St. Michael's have teams of students working together which each of their coordinators feels strengthens each school as well as the cumulative group.

xvii. It was the final speaker on Saturday morning for a conference which had started on Wednesday evening, and literally, we were all exhausted. I felt as though my ears could take in no more...rather like looking at peak foliage while driving on Rt. 100, finally you just give up...no more ways to see or saw how beautiful.

xviii. Nevertheless! I did speak! And a main thrust was that coop education, internships, experiential experiences, and community service exponents needed to stop burning out on the edges of the school organization. That we all needed to find a way to structure what we did so that we were seen as essential, and not as a fringe benefit. And that one way for this to happen is for the service exponents to see that what they do is intellectually rigorous...not the climbing of the rocks, but the understanding by the climbers of what that escarpment is and what it does. That is, we need to be seen as essential to academic understanding...not as an alternative to academic knowledge. Climbing rocks doesn't teach geology, but under the right leadership, every experience with a rock is geological.

Internships

xix. During the past 40 years, as a master teacher, newspaper editor, executive director of a newspaper organization, and a senior program officer for the National Institute of Education, I estimate I have had more than 50 high school and college (mostly college) interns working for and with me for periods from 10 weeks to 50. With one exception (See next Para.), whoever has been responsible for setting up the internship has not asked the student penetrating questions or required and mentored the kind of understandings which should come out of such an experience. For example, an intern at the Christian Science Monitor who comes to the Education Editor (me) and askes to "learn about education writing" should have from his school/college source some kind of interaction beyond "keep a journal of what you do and think."

xx. The exception (actually two exceptions, but only one academically initiated) was a student from Hamilton College in DC who was part of a group of about 20 students each one working in some office of the federal government. Each week he had another challenge: "What is the relationship between the professionals and the support staff?" "What can you find in your office which supports bureaucratic logjams?" "Is the office white male dominated, and what is your reason for saying yes or no?" Etc. Each of the students would come back from a week of observations and journal-keeping to a seminar led

come back from a week of observations and journal-keeping to a seminar led by a political scientist and review what they had learned. They would read relevant material on the subject, and be prepared for the next week's question. The other exception was an intern who came to me at The Monitor to ask me: "What balance do you maintain between alerting your readers to problems in education and telling them about the 'good' things?" I was astounded at an intern asking such a question, and asked what institution he was from and who his professor was and suggested he go to the library and review one year's education page articles -- any one year when I was editor. "Oh," he said, "not my school that asked me to ask that, was my dad." His dad? Saul Bellow!

A Consultation on National Service

xxi. Don Eberly, who has been advocating a kind of national service and running a national service secretariat for some 30 years, drew together the Commission on Voluntary Service and Action and the National Interreligious Service Board for Conscientious Objectors to spend Nov. 2, 3, 4 talking over common issues around the question: "National Service: Is It For Us?"

xxii. I could not attend the early sessions when the various schemes for national service were introduced, including some making their way through Congress, but did join John Swomley, a member of the ACLU national board, a professor at St. Paul's Theological Seminary for a discussion on "Constitutional and Conscience Issues."

xxiii. Fascinating! And out of this came a sub group who spent the remainder of the conference time drafting a statement countering the proposal for either mandatory or voluntary service which would equate military service with human welfare service.

xxiv. I met with a small group of academicians concerned with school-related service, and found them, unlike myself, unwilling to have a school-based service counselor who would serve the needs both of the military and the civilian population.

xxv. And so it was a true "consultation." A true airing of the issues. But as so often happens, those who presented the "mainstream" ideas did not stay around to discuss the "alternative."

xxvi. For me, the most important statement was made by a church man who said that the trouble was that the church people -- the conscience folks -- had never joined hands to organize a national service program acceptable both to them and to the nation. So true...so very true. And listening to him were those guilty of fractionalizing -- running their own small but excellent programs -- and who, sadly for me, left that meeting still willing to swim alone up stream.

Working for Justice

xxvii. I was able to attend just one session of the annual conference of the National Community Service Sentencing Association. This is the professional or-

juvenile offenders." In other words, it is community service ordered by the courts.

xxviii. Such an alternative to a traditional jail sentence is about 20 years old, and started with a pilot program in Alameda County, California. And today there are tens of thousands doing justice-related community service throughout the US, and with jail overcrowding, community service seen as a way to alleviate this housing problem.

xxix. I attended the general session discussing future issues w/two Temple University (Phila.) Professors - M. Kay Harris and Alan Hartland -- and President of the Justice Fellowship in DC, Dave Van Ness. It was a very exciting (and for me, informative) session. For some community service is free labor; for most of the 300 in the room it is punishment -- a form of restitution.

xxx. Ms. Harris asked the audience of community service directors if they could take just one aim or goal for their program with them to a desert island, which one would it be. NOT ONE SAID THE GOAL WAS TO RE-ENGAGE THE OFFENDER BACK INTO THE COMMUNITY. Not one said it was to strengthen the community. Not one talked about citizenship as a shared right/responsibility.

xxi. The talk by those who run community service programs when it is not about punishment is about job skills, saving the community dollars through free service, and the learning by the offenders of how better to use community resources.

xxxii. Oh dear, Oh dear. What an uphill job. The pole I'm trying to shinny up is grease-laden. I'm slipping on service as punishment or as producing a hated war machine or as filling jobs which don't need filling.

xxxiii. As many of us have remarked, the word "service" is part of our problem. Some synonyms:

deference(court-ordered)

command(military)

repair(doing unto others)

benefit(meeting unmet needs)

liturgy(serving God)

Future Corps

xxxiv. Mel King, now an adjunct professor at MIT, but with a long history of public service in the cause of civil rights, is a firm proponent of the Future Corps, a program now being introduced to the Massachusetts Legislature by Mark Roosevelt, Member of the Mass. House.

xxxv. The purpose is to provide access to and funding for college through doing public community service. Recruitment is across the board, with special

attention for those without other financial means to attend post-secondary institutions. A Future Corps volunteer must have a high school degree or GED, must work for a year at minimum hourly wage for a government agency or private 501(c) (3), and by so doing earns a "tuition voucher in an amount equivalent to two years of tuition, room, board, and fees" at a Massachusetts state institution of higher learning. "If a volunteer so chooses, the voucher shall be issued for use at any accredited private institution of higher education." A Future Corps volunteer can sign on to work for two years, and if he/she completes the full time, he/she earns a four year equivalent.

xxxvi. As an inducement for local community service programs to hire a Future Corps volunteer for a full year, the state pays half the minimum hourly wage; the organization hiring the volunteer the other half.

Norwich University's Peace Corps

xxxvii. Fantastic! A program of community service right at the heart of military college. Sophomores who want to devote time after college to service in a developing nation -- after a rigorous screening process -- step into a curriculum which includes Outward Bound experience, course work exploring the third world and the world community, practical experience with domestic civilian community service, and summer experiences stateside and overseas.

xxxviii. Added inducements, include low interest college loans and forgiveness of NDSL loans at 30%, 50% and 70% for 2, 3, or 4 years in the Peace Corps. Volunteers may serve, as well, with other government agencies, and with private and religious organizations serving in the developing nations.

"SerVermont -- The Second Year 1987"

xxxix. There would seem to be a need for such a report; whether it should just be a memo, or whether it should be another "book," is a question I'm struggling with.

xxxx. Any suggestions?

The Boston Sunday Globe **January 11, 1987**

Ex-educator is teaching volunteer spirit

By Douglas Wilhalm
Special to the Globe

CHESTER, Vt. -- At a quiet mountain crossroads here is a 111-year-old, one-room schoolhouse that a former national education editor rescued from empty decay. Living and working inside, tapping at a computer and scribbling her ideas on the blackboards, Cynthia Parsons is trying to bring something back to Vermont schools, and even to the nation's.

It is the notion of service. The onetime teacher and retired editor for the Christian Science Monitor believes that students today are too rarely encouraged to contribute to their communities -- and partly as a result, communities are weakening, and many service organizations are struggling to find volunteers.

In 1985 she decided to do something about that. Last year, with the public blessing of Gov. Madeleine Kunin, Parsons created SerVermont, which is working with the state but without public funds. "It's not an independent organization and it's not a program," Parsons says. "It's a dream."

SerVermont's first round of projects have come in three areas: working with senior citizens, with town governments and with libraries. Some of the undertakings in schools are:

- At Whitcomb Junior-Senior High School in Bethel, students in a woodworking and drafting program made a "Welcome to Bethel" sign for an entrance to town, at the selectmen's request. Since then they've offered the same service to other town governments or nonprofit groups.
- At the West Rutland School, library aides plan to train other students to use an electric typewriter to produce book reports and other projects. Their goals are to help motivate "nonreaders and reluctant readers," promote volunteerism and help students move on to using the school library's computer.
- At Concord High School, a class has "adopted" a local senior citizens' home. Students will exchange birthday and holiday greeting cards, plan special projects and programs and promote letter-writing among students and senior citizens.
- At Poultney High School, members of the school's new Media Club had some ideas for projects, but no money. Last fall they prepared budgets and proposals, and won a pair of $200 SerVermont mini-grants. Now club members are working on two slide and tape presentations: one that will introduce preschoolers to the four libraries in town, and a second called "ABSeeing Poultney," which links a child's letter-blocks to various scenes around town -- as in "O is for Griffin's Apple Orchard" -- to promote both reading skills and community awareness.

Interviewed last week, the Poultney students said they hope their work will benefit preschoolers, the town and themselves.

"Hopefully the SerVermont thing will set a precedent for other states, and encourage young people to work within their communities," said Amy Hanson, a junior.

"It's different from homework," added David Dodge. "You get a little bit more responsibility," and, the senior added, more satisfaction.

"Once we're done with this, we'll have something to show," said Hanson. "That's a good thing. We can prove that we went through a project and completed it."

To get SerVermont going, Parsons raised money last year from three foundations and visited every one of the state's 66 secondary schools, offering a mini-grant competition that has sparked service projects by students in 20 percent of those schools.

Expanding on that success, this month Parsons wrote to every secondary-level teacher in the state, offering the grants of up to $200 as expense money for service projects that would enhance classroom learning. And a SerVermont intern, using state office space, is compiling a directory of every nonprofit and government group in the state that could use student volunteers.

State Education Commissioner Stephen Kaagan, marveling at Parson's energy, believes Vermont now has the nation's only statewide effort to encourage community service in schools.

"What SerVermont is all about is citizenship education, in an active sense," Kaagan said. "Universally, I think this country ought to be a bit self-critical about the selfishness of individuals in society. What SerVermont is saying is that we have responsibilities to each other -- and if we're going to carry out those responsibilities, we ought to have a way that young people can learn about them."

Adds Parsons: "I call it building small 'd' democrats."

Parsons said she found that many Vermont schools already encourage some form of service -- but usually for honor students or disciplinary problems, rarely for everyone. Volunteering her time, Parsons has pledged 10 years to SerVermont, and she hopes it will have a national impact.

"My goal is that service should be seen as part of what we teach our children," Parsons said.

The Black River Tribune **January 14, 1987**

She Serves Vermont In Special Way

By Cam Montgomery

GASSETTS -- It is entirely appropriate that Cynthia Parsons lives in a one-room school house.

Because schools are where she has spent the better part of her life.

It is just as appropriate that she has remodeled the school house in a way that it still retains the flavor of its 112-year-old history, but yet is up to date with all the amenities.

Like its owner, the house is wide-open and expansive, orderly and productive. On the ground floor level is the one room school house, still with the blackboard at one end, the old school clock, a couple of the old desks and chairs, ancient pictures of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. But right alongside them is a word processor and a printout machine.

This section of the house has the numbers "1874" tacked on the outside. The upstairs room in the back of the house, over the garage, has the numbers "1974" (the date it was built) tacked on the outside. The upstairs room is Parsons' library and study, with shelves of books all along one side, and a wide-ranging desk in the middle of the room. Both rooms are high-ceilinged, both heated by wood stoves, the one downstairs a well-used soapstone.

The sun glistens through the high windows of the school room and joins its warmth with that of the stove, as Cynthia Parsons leans back in her chair and chats, vigirously, excitingly, about the accomplishments of the year just finished, and the ones she is looking forward to.

Sitting beside her is Lisanne Dooman, who is her accomplice in a program they are engaged in that is not, she hastens to add, just a program.

What it is, is a dream, a dream that discovers reality by going out and doing things for other people.

It is called "SerVermont."

This is not a bumper sticker, like "LoVermont," it is something more generous, more heartfelt, more lasting, than even that sentiment.

For the past year, Cynthia Parsons has been tooling around Vermont -- about 10,000 miles of it -- going from school to school to school, carrying with her the message of "service."

She does this with a dynamic personality that would have one believing that if all the 66 high schools in the state had students doing voluntary service to help, in their communities, there would be such an enrichment of spirit for both the helpers and the helped that dreams would be coming true all over the place.

SerVermont got its start when Parsons got grants totaling $31,500 for 18 months of work starting in January, 1986 and ending in June, 1987. The grants came from The Edwin Gould Foundation for Children, The Turrel Fund and the Commonwealth Fund.

Cynthia Parsons (left) and Lisanne Dooman bask in the sunlight coming through the high windows of the Cavendish schoolhouse which is Parsons home. Parsons is coordinator of SerVermont, a statewide community service school project and Dooman is the intern. photo Montgomery

They started her on the road to every high school in the state, after she got a sendoff from Gov. Madeleine Kunin, who announced, in her 1986 state of the state address, that, "In the coming year, we will launch a volunteer program for high school students, stressing public service in the community, called Ser-Vermont.

"Students," the governor noted, "will be taught the value of personal volunteer service and our communities should benefit from their efforts."

The highest priority was to be projects to meet the needs of senior citizens, but anything that would go toward betterment of the community -- improving libraries, helping preschoolers, giving a hand to outreach programs, cleaning up the environment -- would be encouraged.

To help participating schools, $200 mini-grants were given to teams of students who "dreamed up" ways of helping their town government, or community centers, or senior citizens.

"By the time the year was over," says Parsons, who has written an extensive report on the project which is coming out shortly," about 20 percent of the schools in the state had started new projects in their communities.

Burr and Burton Seminary in Manchester now has a required course in community service, with high school credit given for it.

Champlain Valley Union High School has 300 of its 1,000 students doing community service.

Rutland High School has an active program with Rutland Hospital.

Woodstock has an ambitious service program.

Craftsbury Academy has a fine senior citizen relationship.

In Winooski, the Spanish teacher has integrated the community service into her classes by having students translate Vermont state regulations for Spanish speaking refugees in the Burlington area.

"Getting teachers to incorporate community service into their curriculums is one of our major goals," says Parsons. "We have home economics teachers, for instance, having their students helping in day care centers."

The idea of community service, to Cynthia Parsons, is a lifelong one, that started, she says, with her step-father, who taught her to be mindful of the needs of the towns she lived in, not in a "clubby" way, she says, but in a heartfelt, individual way.

Moving around a lot when she was a youngster -- she remembers she attended 11 schools in 12 years -- she had many opportunities to see where helping hands were needed. It was the same in college. She attended six of them: The Principia College, where she got her bachelor's degree; Putney Graduate, where she got her master's; and graduate studies at USC, UCLA, Syracuse and Harvard. And then she tutored and taught in schools in Georgia, California, Vermont, Maine, Connecticut and New York.

In addition, she was education editor for the Christian Science Monitor for 15 years.

She is currently a visiting instructor for Geelong College, in Australia, and for Robert College in Istanbul, not to mention the University of Vermont and Dartmouth.

If that isn't enough, she has written and published books on schools, one titled, "Schools Can Change," another called "Seeds," and she is working on still another, titled, "Like What?"

But with all her activities, she says SerVermont is going to occupy her for the next ten years.

And her dream is to see the day when service to the community becomes a part of the curriculum of every high school in the state.

"If SerVermont ever becomes part and parcel of our schools, here, in Vermont, that would make me delirious with joy," she says.

Perhaps then she'll just retire to her little schoolhouse in Gassetts and finish that novel she's been trying to find time to work on.

Rutland Herald **August 22, 1987**

Young And Old Together, The Way It Should Be

By Bethany Greeley

For the past seven years, Gene Seese has wondered what it was like inside the small nursing home on Route 35 in Townshend.

"I go to school right across the street, at Leland and Gray Union High School," the 13-year-old said, "but this winter was the first time I ever went inside Stratton House."

In fact, Gene had never visited any nursing home until last January.

How many of us, well beyond age 13, have also wondered but never visited? "Too depressing," we imagine. "Everyone is dying," we fear. And so life goes on in Vermont's 50 nursing homes, often isolated unobserved and unappreciated.

In fact, when we speak the words "nursing home" with the accent on 'home,' rather than on 'nursing,' our attitude toward such facilities can be quite warm and positive. For just like the life that unfolds in our own homes, nursing homes house residents (not patients) who are living (not dying).

Consider that thought for a moment. Residents who are living.

No one knows this reality better than ninth-grader Gene Seese. One of 14 students participating in a service learning project at Stratton House, Gene tends the red caps and calicoes and betas, as well as a parakeet, who live at the nursing home.

"Red caps, calicoes and betas are fish" he explained. "We also have an algae eater in the tank. The betas died."

Funded with a $300 grant by the State Department of Education, the intergenerational pet project was designed to build relationships between young and old, as well as increase student awareness of specific health issues.

Watching Gene and his peers (including 17-year-old Michelle Brooks, who landed a part-time paying summer job through her involvement with the program) relate to the residents, one can easily see another benefit. Fear is not present. And isn't fear what keeps most of us from crossing the nursing home threshold?

For those of us under 20, the fear seems to be just not knowing what to say to someone old, "with a face like that;" scary and unfamiliar.

For those of us over 20, it's fear of what we'll see -- illness, senility, dying...our own mortality...thoughts of aging: "Yikes! I'm going to look like that someday?"

Gene and Michelle and the rest of the crew recruited by school nurse Joan Smidutz have grown beyond their fear, which is indeed what maturing is all about. Playing checkers on a polished oak checkerboard (made by Kurt Bostrom in shop classes for the nursing home) Michelle sits comfortably facing 88-year-old Rob Brooks, a Stratton House resident who also happens to be her uncle.

Small-town life in Townshend, a southern Vermont community of 916, about 20 miles from Brattleboro, seems most suited to lazy July afternoons leaning over a checkerboard. And it seems equally fitting that residents and staff are related and most folks know most folks.

Yet, for all the intimacy of small town life, it took a grant offered by the state Department of Education to get kids and pets to the local long-term care facility, a mini-grant administered through SerVermont, a volunteer program that state education commissioner Stephen S. Kaagan said "give schools in the state a very important vehicle to introduce students to the responsibilities of citizenship."

What are our responsibilities as citizens? To make sure those who have gone before us, those who built the communities we live in, are not forgotten. For our own sake, too, we need to know what they have learned. We need to acquire their hard-earned wisdom about how people treat each other, how families evolve, how grudges are so dangerous and family feuds so futile.

The aquariums and birdcages ("Tweeter" lives in Stratton House, and "Tweetie" in Heins House, the adjacent community care home) contributed and maintained by the students are a cheerful addition to the home's decor.

Stratton administrator Effie Chamberlain promises to pick up the costs for continuing the project when the grant runs out. She can easily attest to the ongoing advantages of the program.

According to an article in the July issue of Highlights, a publication of the American Association of Retired Persons, "pets are good for your health. People who cared for another living being know they're needed. They must be reliable and plan for the future. They live in hope."

But the real story here is not limited to the signs of life pets symbolize. What the Leland and Gray students are learning is a life lesson: the value of volunteering. Interacting, no-strings-attached, with one another -- not as an employee or family member, but just as an interested person -- generates joy for all involved.

Giving of ourselves, reaching out to strangers so they aren't strangers any more, learning about the stages of life and how to move with some savvy and grace through them; all of these gifts come to those who serve.

Bethany McLean Greeley is executive-director of the Vermont Health Care Association, located in Montpelier.

Los Angeles Times **April 5, 1987**

To Serve and Be Served: Voluntary Youth Service

By Cynthia Parsons

CHESTER, VT. -- There is some snail-paced progress from coast to coast in adopting the notion of 15-25-year-olds performing voluntary service, whether they are in high school or college, out of school or out of work. But as a long-time advocate of such a national-service idea, I keep waiting for real lightning to strike:

• For President Reagan, for instance not only to invoke the word *volunteer*, but also to embrace the concept and set up a national service organization.

• For one of the several bills in the 100th Congress dealing with voluntary (or even mandatory) youth service to make it to the floor, if not to a vote.

In the meantime, there are these positive developments:

• California has a growing number of conservation corps, each a little different, but the majority strive to have the work done be work that wouldn't otherwise be done -- work that somehow enriches people, community and even the nation.

• Massachusetts has the Thomas Jefferson Forum, which includes several public high schools, all committed to helping students do high-quality, person-to-person community service, to culminate in a forum linking the service performed with the rights and responsibilities of national citizenship.

• Vermont has the nation's only state-wide student community-service initiative, started by me because I believe students won't volunteer for national service if they haven't learned the joys of service while still in school.

• Father Theodore M. Hesburgh [please see his article above], the retiring long-time president of Notre Dame, has called for a domestic Peace Corps and for a repayment to those who do national community service in college tuition payments -- much the way the GI Bill rewards those who serve in the military.

• More than 100 colleges and universities from Stanford to Brown have set up offices to coordinate service volunteers, and have begun paying close attention to the following request on the college admissions application form: "Describe your community service during junior and senior high school years."

Yes, there's still considerable controversy over what "national service" means. There are people determined to limit it to a kind of Peace Corps right-of-passage experience -- and people determined to exclude military service in any form from their definitions.

And there are those who think national service is just another name for job-training of the hard-to-place and hard-to-educate juvenile underclass.

Then there are those who are "expected" to do community service, because they are the nation's future "leaders." Honor society members, student-body

And at the other end of the social-success scale are those required to do community service precisely because they have not shown "leadership potential." Many communities, for example, provide community service as an alternative to jail or detention.

In January, 1985, when I began exploring community services nationwide with the aid of a research grant from the Edwin Gould Foundation for Children, national service was almost a forgotten issue. Only a handful of long-time advocates were still fanning what had become a weak flame.

And the military -- to meet its quota of service personnel -- had found it necessary to push pay scales higher and higher, to entice 18-year-olds not with a call to service but to self-improvement ("Be all you can be!")

The military hasn't changed its tune. And there's plenty of evidence that today's young people are still enormously interested in "getting there" -- wherever there is -- without having to step off the ladder of success to help an elderly good cause to cross the street.

And yet there blows a new wind; I hear a heightened interest in volunteerism among the young, a longing for a cause worth energy and interest. While I spend a great deal of time visiting Vermont's schools, I also get around the country to ask young people about national service. Too often, they don't recognize the term; but as soon as I start talking about meeting human-service needs, a spark comes into their eyes.

Then I hear about college students who house-share with former convicts on parole in Nashville, Tenn.; about all-night weekend vigils serving hot lines to keep drunks off the road in Burlington, Vt.; about a reform-school student who asked not to be discharged before his "little brother" in a nearby crippled children's center could walk on his new crutches.

How to raise those sparks and put national service higher up on the national agenda? How to accelerate the snail's pace?

- Every elementary school should ask every teacher to integrate some community service within course requirements.
- Every guidance counselor in every public secondary school should urge each student to complete a portfolio of information about all voluntary service done in school, local community, church, and/or international settings.
- Every post-secondary institution, as part of its admissions' procedure, should ask to review each voluntary service portfolio.
- Every nonprofit or government agency willing to use student volunteers should establish a system among all schools and colleges for reaching interested students.
- The 100th Congress should pass a bill calling for a commission to set up a national service center, and to design a method to reward all national service (civilian or military) with tuition payments in post-secondary institutions of the volunteer's choice.

Cynthia Parsons is the coordinator of SerVermont and the former education editor of the Christian Science Monitor.